

Claims

1. A method of printing a print job in a computer-based printer system, the system comprising at least one printer and at least one computer connected to said printer(s), wherein the or each printer has a plurality of different printing configurations at least one of which is manually configurable and the or each computer is capable of generating at least one print job, said print job(s) having corresponding printing requirements, each printing configuration being capable of satisfying one or more printing requirements, the method comprising the steps of using the printing system to:
  - 15 i) create one or more print jobs;
  - ii) determine whether or not the or each print job can be printed using said printer(s) by comparing the printing requirements of the or each print job and the current printing configurations of the printer(s);
  - 20 iii) when one or more of the print jobs cannot be printed using said printer(s) on the basis of said current printing configuration, determining at least one reconfiguration of the printer configuration(s) that would be capable of satisfying the printing requirement(s) of said print job(s); and
  - 25 iv) performing such a reconfiguration of the printer configuration or providing information to enable such a reconfiguration to be carried out by another.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein step iv) comprises determining when said reconfiguration would require manual reconfiguration of said printer(s) by a user of the printing system, and if so using the printing system to generate and present to said user instructions for manually reconfiguring said printer(s) prior to printing of the print job(s) by the printing system.

3. A method as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2, in which 10 the method involves prior to step iv) the steps of:

v) calculating an economic cost for effecting each of a plurality of possible reconfigurations for which the printer configuration(s) would be capable of satisfying 15 the printing requirement(s) of said print job(s); and

vi) selecting according to the calculated economic costs one or more preferred reconfigurations of said printer(s) for which reconfiguration instructions will be presented 20 to said user.

4. A method as claimed in Claim 3, in which there are a plurality of preferred reconfigurations, and the reconfiguration information presented to said user 25 includes the corresponding economic cost for each preferred configuration.

5. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which there are a plurality of different preferred 30 reconfigurations which would involve both manual configuration by the user and automatic configuration by the printing system.

6. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which there are a plurality of different preferred reconfigurations, and prior to step iv) these preferred configurations are presented to user of the printing system so that the user can select a particular reconfiguration, for which reconfiguration instructions are then presented in step iv).

10 7. A method as claimed in Claim 2, in which a computer includes a user display, and said presentation of instructions includes the display of reconfiguration instructions on the user display.

15 8. A method as claimed in Claim 2, in which said presentation of instructions includes the printing of reconfiguration instructions on a printer.

9. A method as claimed in Claim 8, in which a computer includes a user display, in which said presentation of instructions includes a message displayed on the user display informing the user that reconfiguration instructions are to be printed on said printer.

25 10. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which after reconfiguration of the printer(s), the print job is assigned to more than one printer, and the printing system presents to a user of the printing system instructions for any or all of locating, assembling, collating, binding, or 30 otherwise combining material printed from the printers.

11. A method as claimed in Claim 10, in which the print

job has a plurality of different parts, each part having different printing requirements, and the print job is split according to those different requirements.

- 5 12. A computer-based printing system, the printing system comprising at least one printer and at least one computer connected to said printer(s), the or each printer having a plurality of different printing configurations at least one of which is manually configurable and the or each 10 computer being capable of generating at least one print job, said print job(s) having corresponding printing requirements, each printing configuration being capable of satisfying one or more printing requirements, wherein the printing system is arranged to: determine whether or not 15 each print job can be printed using said printer(s) by comparing the printing requirements of the or each print job and the current printing configurations of the printer(s); and when one or more of the print jobs cannot be printed using said printer(s) on the basis of said 20 current printing configuration, to determine at least one reconfiguration of the printer configuration(s) that would be capable of satisfying the printing requirement(s) of said print job(s); and when said reconfiguration would require manual reconfiguration of said printer(s) by a 25 user of the printing system, then use the printing system to generate and present to said user instructions for manually reconfiguring said printer(s) prior to printing of the print job(s) by the printing system.
- 30 13. A computer system programmed for providing print job information to printers connected to the computer system by a computer network, wherein one or more processors of

the computer system are programmed to:

create a print job;

5 determine whether or not the print job can be printed using one or more printers in communication with the computer system by comparing the printing requirements of the print job and the current printing configurations of the one or more printers; when the print job cannot be printed using the one or more printers in their current printing configuration, determine at least one reconfiguration of the one or more printers that would be capable of satisfying the printing requirements of said print job; and

10 perform such a reconfiguration of the one or more printers or providing information to enable such a reconfiguration to be carried out by another.

14. A data carrier having thereon a computer program containing code adapted to program one or more processors 20 of a computer system to:

obtain current printing configurations of one or more printers in communication with the computer system;

25 determine whether or not a print job can be printed using such one or more printers by comparing the printing requirements of the print job and the current printing configurations of the one or more printers;

30 when the print job cannot be printed using the one or more printers in their current printing configuration, determine at least one reconfiguration of the one or more printers that would be capable of satisfying the printing requirements of the print job; and

perform such a reconfiguration of the one or more

printers or providing information to enable such a reconfiguration to be carried out by another.

15. A method of printing a print job in a computer-based  
5 printer system, substantially as herein described, with  
reference to or as shown in the accompanying drawings.

16. A computer-based printing system, substantially as  
herein described, with reference to or as shown in the  
10 accompanying drawings.

17. A computer system programmed for providing print job  
information to printers connected to the computer system  
by a computer network, substantially as herein described,  
15 with reference to or as shown in the accompanying  
drawings.